

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (previously presented) A retractable roof structural system for a vehicle body having quarter panel sections, the system comprising:

a retractable roof operable between raised and stowed positions;

a retraction mechanism operable to move said retractable roof between said raised and stowed positions;

a decklid operable between first and second positions, said decklid allowing movement of said retractable roof between said raised and stowed positions when said decklid is in said second position, and said decklid covering at least a portion of said retractable roof when in said stowed position when said decklid is in said first position; and

a structural member operable to provide structural support to and increase a stiffness of a vehicle body on which said retractable roof is utilized, said structural member being configured to be selectively coupled adjacent the opposing quarter panel sections, and said structural member is uncoupled when said retractable roof is moving between said raised and stowed positions, and said structural member extends across the vehicle in a cross-vehicle direction below a belt line of the vehicle and adjacent to at least one of a strut tower and a rear wheel housing when coupled.

2. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein said structural member is attached to said decklid and moves with said decklid between said first and second positions.

3. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein said retractable roof is a hard-top retractable roof.

4. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein said retractable roof is a soft-top retractable roof.

5. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein said structural member is attached to a frame of said decklid.

6. (original) The system of claim 1, further comprising a retaining mechanism attached to said vehicle body between said opposing quarter panel sections, said retaining mechanism being operable to selectively couple said structural member to said vehicle body.

7. (previously presented) An automotive vehicle comprising:
a retractable roof operable between raised and stowed positions; and
a moveable structural member operable to selectively provide structural support and rigidity to a vehicle body on which said retractable roof is utilized, said structural member selectively coupled to said vehicle body between adjacent body panel structures of said vehicle body and extending in a cross-vehicle orientation, a majority of a cross-vehicle extending portion of said structural member, when coupled, being above a fore-and-aft middle section of said retractable roof when in said stowed position, and said structural member being uncoupled from said vehicle body when said retractable roof is moving between said raised and stowed positions.

8. (previously presented) The vehicle of claim 7, further comprising a decklid operable between first and second positions, said decklid when in said first position covering at least a portion of said retractable roof when in said stowed position, and said decklid allowing movement of said retractable roof between said raised and stowed positions when said decklid is in said second position.

9. (original) The vehicle of claim 8, wherein said structural member is coupled to said vehicle body when said decklid is in said first position and is uncoupled from said vehicle body when said decklid is in said second position.

10. (original) The vehicle of claim 9, wherein said structural member is coupled to said decklid and moves with said decklid between said first and second positions.

11. (original) The vehicle of claim 10, wherein said structural member is attached to a frame of said decklid.

12. (original) The vehicle of claim 7, wherein said retractable roof is a hard-top retractable roof.

13. (original) The vehicle of claim 7, wherein said retractable roof is a soft-top retractable roof.

14. (original) The vehicle of claim 7, further comprising a retaining mechanism attached to said vehicle body between said adjacent body panel structures, said retaining mechanism being operable to selectively couple said structural member to said vehicle body.

15. (original) The vehicle of claim 7, further comprising a retraction mechanism operable to move said retractable roof between said raised and stowed positions.

16. (previously presented) A decklid system for an automotive vehicle, the decklid system comprising:

a storage compartment covering panel configured to cover a portion of an automotive vehicle;

a panel mechanism operable to move said panel between a first position covering said portion of said automotive vehicle and a second position allowing accesses to said covered portion, said panel mechanism including a frame that supports said panel; and

a structural member attached to said frame and operable to selectively provide structural support and rigidity to a body of said vehicle, said structural member extending in a cross-vehicle orientation, being engaged with said body of said vehicle, and providing said support when said panel is in said first position, and said structural member being disengaged from said body of said vehicle when said panel is in said second position.

17. (original) The decklid system of claim 16, further comprising a retaining mechanism on said body of said vehicle and wherein said structural member selectively engages with said retaining mechanism to provide said structural support to said body of said vehicle.

18. (original) The decklid system of claim 17, wherein said retaining mechanism includes a latching member operable to latch said structural member to said retaining mechanism.

19. (original) The decklid system of claim 18, wherein said latching member is a power pull down latching member operable to automatically latch said structural member to said retaining mechanism.

20. (original) The decklid system of claim 17, wherein said retaining mechanism has a sloped surface that aligns said structural member with said retaining mechanism.

21. (original) The decklid system of claim 20, wherein said structural member has a sloped surface that is complementary to said sloped surface of said retaining mechanism and said sloped surfaces align said structural member with said retaining mechanism.

22. (original) The decklid system of claim 17, wherein said retaining mechanism has a clamping member that selectively clamps said structural member to said retaining mechanism.

23. (original) The decklid system of claim 17, further comprising a pin member operable to align said structural member with said retaining mechanism.

24. (cancelled)

25. (original) The decklid system of claim 16, wherein said structural member is attached to said panel.

26. (original) The decklid system of claim 16, wherein said panel is a two way opening panel, said panel mechanism is operable to move said panel to a third position to allow access to said covered portion of said vehicle, and access to said covered portion of said vehicle when said panel is in said second and third positions being from different directions.

27. (original) The decklid system of claim 16, wherein said structural member extends in a cross-vehicle orientation between opposing body panel structures of said body of said vehicle when providing said support.

28. (currently amended) A method of manufacturing a universal stowage area in an automotive vehicle for stowing a convertible roof and providing substantially an equivalent torsional rigidity to the stowage area regardless of the convertible roof being a soft-top or hard-top convertible roof, the method comprising:

(a) positioning retaining mechanisms in the stowage area of the automotive vehicle;

(b) attaching a moveable structural member operable to engage with said retaining mechanisms to provide structural support and torsional rigidity to the storage area and installing a second mechanism in the stowage area that is operable to move said structural member between a first position enabling said structural member to engage with said retaining mechanisms and a second position disengaged from said retaining mechanism and allowing clearance for raising and stowing a convertible roof;
[[and]]

(c) selectively securing said structural member to the stowage area of the vehicle with said retaining mechanisms and with said structural member extending in a cross-vehicle orientation in an upper half of the stowage area[.]; and

(d) securing a decklid panel to said second mechanism that moves with said structural member between said first and second positions,

wherein said second mechanism is coupled to a frame, said structural member is coupled to said frame, said decklid panel is coupled to and supported by said frame and said second mechanism is operable to move said frame, said structural member and said decklid panel between said first and second positions.

29 - 30. (cancelled)

31. (original) The method of claim 28, further comprising installing a hard-top convertible roof system in the vehicle.

32. (original) The method of claim 28, further comprising installing a soft-top convertible roof system in the vehicle.

33. (previously presented) A method of moving a retractable roof between a raised position covering a portion of a passenger compartment of a vehicle and a stowed position in a storage area of the vehicle, the method comprising:

(a) disengaging a structural member that extends in a cross-vehicle orientation across a front half of the storage area from a retaining mechanism in said front half of the storage area, said structural member being coupled to a moveable frame supporting a panel operable to cover at least a portion of the storage area, and moving said structural member from a first position providing structural support and rigidity to the storage area to a second non-interfering position that allows movement of the retractable roof between the raised and stowed positions;

(b) moving the retractable roof between the raised and stowed positions; and

(c) moving said structural member from said second position to said first position, and engaging said structural member with said retaining mechanism and covering at least a portion of the storage area with said panel.

34. (cancelled)

35. (previously presented) The method of claim 33, wherein (c) includes securing said structural member to said retaining mechanism with a latch.

36. (original) The method of claim 35, wherein (c) includes securing said structural member to said retaining mechanism with a power pull down latch.

37. (previously presented) The method of claim 33, wherein (c) includes securing said structural member to said retaining mechanism with a clamp.

38. (previously presented) A method of moving a retractable roof between a raised position covering a portion of a passenger compartment of a vehicle and a stowed position in a storage area of the vehicle, the method comprising:

(a) disengaging a structural member that extends in a cross-vehicle orientation across a front half of the storage area from a retaining mechanism in said front half of the storage area and moving said structural member from a first position providing structural support and rigidity to the storage area to a second non-interfering position that allows movement of the retractable roof between the raised and stowed positions;

(b) moving the retractable roof between the raised and stowed positions; and

(c) moving said structural member from said second position to said first position, aligning said structural member with said retaining mechanism with a pin and engaging said structural member with said retaining mechanism.

39. (previously presented) The method of claim 33, wherein (c) includes moving said structural member along a sloped surface of said retaining mechanism to align said structural member with said retaining mechanism.

40. (original) The method of claim 33, wherein (a) includes moving a decklid panel from a first position covering a portion of the storage area to a second non-interfering position that allows movement of the retractable roof between the raised and stowed positions and (c) includes moving said decklid panel from said second position to said first position.

41. (original) The method of claim 40, wherein (a) and (c) include moving said structural member and said decklid panel in unison.

42. (currently amended) A movable structural system for a vehicle body having a storage area, the system comprising:

a cover member operable between first and second positions to selectively cover at least a portion of the storage area;

a pair of retaining mechanisms in said storage area; [[and]]

a structural support member operable between engaged and disengaged positions with said retaining mechanisms and moving with said cover member in at least one operable position, said structural support member having a cross-vehicle portion that extends across the storage area in a cross-vehicle orientation when in said engaged position, said structural support member having a pair of downwardly extending portions that extend from said cross-vehicle portion and engage with said retaining mechanisms when in said engaged position to provide structural support to and increase a torsional rigidity of a vehicle body, said downwardly extending portions being substantially vertically oriented when in said engaged position; and

a frame upon which said cover member is coupled, movement of said frame between said first and second positions causing said cover member to move between said first and second positions and wherein said support member is attached to said frame with said downwardly extending portions of said structural support member extending downwardly beyond said frame.

43. (cancelled)

44. (previously presented) The system of claim 42, further comprising a retractable roof operable between raised and stowed positions and said cover member, when in said first position, covers at least a portion of said retractable roof when in said stowed position.

45. (previously presented) A storage compartment cover latching system comprising:

a movable cover member operable between first and second positions to selectively cover at least a portion of the storage compartment;

a latching member coupled to said moveable cover, said latching member having a recessed portion with sloping sidewalls; and

a latching mechanism operable to selectively engage with said latching member and retain said cover member in said first position, said latching mechanism including a pair of opposing moveable clamping members that move toward one another and are operable to selectively encircle said recessed portion of said latching member and retain said cover member in said first position.

46-47. (cancelled)

48. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein said retractable roof is below the belt line of the vehicle when in said stowed position.

49. (cancelled)

50. (currently amended) ~~The method of claim 30,~~ A method of manufacturing a universal stowage area in an automotive vehicle for stowing a convertible roof and providing substantially an equivalent torsional rigidity to the stowage area regardless of the convertible roof being a soft-top or hard-top convertible roof, the method comprising:

(a) positioning retaining mechanisms in the stowage area of the automotive vehicle;

(b) attaching a moveable structural member operable to engage with said retaining mechanisms to provide structural support and torsional rigidity to the storage area and installing a second mechanism in the stowage area that is operable to move said structural member between a first position enabling said structural member to engage with said retaining mechanisms and a second position disengaged from said retaining mechanism and allowing clearance for raising and stowing a convertible roof;

(c) selectively securing said structural member to the stowage area of the vehicle with said retaining mechanisms and with said structural member extending in a cross-vehicle orientation in an upper half of the stowage area; and

(d) securing a decklid panel to said second mechanism that moves with said structural member between said first and second positions,

wherein securing said decklid panel includes securing a dual-acting decklid panel that can selectively move between said second position and a third position independently of said structural member to selectively allow access to said stowage area.

51. (previously presented) The method of claim 33, wherein (a) and (c) include moving said frame and panel with movement of said structural member.

52. (currently amended) ~~The system of claim 42;~~ A movable structural system for a vehicle body having a storage area, the system comprising:

a cover member operable between first and second positions to selectively cover at least a portion of the storage area;

a pair of retaining mechanisms in said storage area; and

a structural support member operable between engaged and disengaged positions with said retaining mechanisms and moving with said cover member in at least one operable position, said structural support member having a cross-vehicle portion that extends across the storage area in a cross-vehicle orientation when in said engaged position, said structural support member having a pair of downwardly extending portions that extend from said cross-vehicle portion and engage with said retaining mechanisms when in said engaged position to provide structural support to and increase a torsional rigidity of a vehicle body, said downwardly extending portions being substantially vertically oriented when in said engaged position,

wherein said cover is moveable to a third position to selectively allow access to the storage area from two opposing directions.